
Report of the Conference held at Simla on the 20th and 21st August 1917, to consider the question of English and Vernacular teaching in secondary schools.

MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE.

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Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

THE HON'BLE MR. H. SHARP, M.A., C.S.I., C.I.E.,

Officiating Secretary to the Government of India.

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Madras.

1. THE HON'BLE MR. J. H. STONE, M.A., C.I.E., *Director of Public Instruction.*
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3. REVEREND W. MESTON, M.A., B.D., *Bursar and Professor of English, Madras Christian College.*
4. RAO BAHADUR K. SESA AYYAR, *Headmaster, Municipal High School, Movavaram.*

5. THE HON'BLE J. G. VERNTON, M.A., C.I.E., *Director of Public Instruction.*

6. V. B. NAIK, ESQ., M.A., *Superintendent, New English School, Poona.*

7. G. K. DEVADHAR, ESQ., M.A., *Servants of India Society, Poona.*

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9. THE HON'BLE MR. W. W. HORNE, M.A., M.R.A.S., *Director of Public Instruction.*

10. RAI BAHADUR DR. PURNANANDA CHATTERJI, B.A., B. SC., *Inspector of Schools, Rajshahi Division.*

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United Provinces.

12. THE HON'BLE MR. C. F. DE LA FOSSE, M.A., *Director of Public Instruction.*

13. THE HON'BLE SIR SUNDAR LAL, KT., C.I.E.

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16. THE HON'BLE MR. J. A. RICHEY, M. A., *Director of Public Instruction.*

17. THE HON'BLE KHAN BAHADUR M. FAZL-I-HUSAIN, M.A.,
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18. BAKHSI RAM RATTAN, B.A., B.T., *Headmaster, Dayanand Anglo-Vedic High School, Lahore.*

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19. THE HON'BLE RAI BAHADUR DVARIKA NATH, B.A., LL.B.

Central Provinces.

20. PANDIT KANHAYALAL GURU, M. A., *Inspector of Schools, Chhattisgarh Division.*

21. PANDIT SITACHARAN DUBE, M.A., B.L., *Pleader and Chairman of the District Council, Hoshangabad.*

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY AT THE OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE.

You have been asked to meet here in Simla to consider certain important questions relating to our educational system, and I have come to open your conference, not with any idea of attempting to influence your deliberations, but with the sole purpose of bidding you welcome and of emphasising the importance I attach to the questions which you are about to discuss. And first let me repeat, at the risk of seeming platitudinous, the principle which, I would urge, should govern all educational conferences :—Examine the question which is being laid before you solely from the educational standpoint. I quite appreciate that it may be looked at from other points of view, but we are not asking you to do this. What we are asking you to consider is whether, accepting the present policy with regard to English, any improvement can be made in the general arrangements now in force in our schools with reference to the teaching of English and the use of English as a *medium* of instruction, keeping two desiderata in view—first, that students may be enabled to obtain a better grasp of the subjects which they are taught ; and, secondly, that they may complete their secondary course with a more adequate knowledge of the English language than at present.

Some of you may be aware in this connection that the larger question of making the Indian vernaculars *media* of instruction and the study of English, as a second language, compulsory for Indian pupils in all secondary schools was brought up in the form of a resolution in the Imperial Council in March 1915, and that the then Education Member, Sir Harcourt Butler, deprecated any reference to local Governments on the subject until after the end of the war. It is not our intention to go back on this decision, but I have thought it well that we should have this small conference in the meantime with a view to clear the ground and to arrive at a better idea of the points which should later on be referred to local Governments for consideration.

You will observe then that the scope of your enquiry is strictly limited, but none the less there is important spadework for you to do, and I look forward to valuable conclusions being reached by you. While, however, you will be forming your conclusions on the working of the present arrangements prevailing in the schools, it may not be amiss if I remind you briefly of the past history of this question in its broader aspects.

As you are all aware, we go back for our beginnings to Macaulay's famous minute of 2nd February, 1835. In that minute Macaulay gave, as has been said, a decisive bias to the course of education in India and decided unhesitatingly in favour of English. But Macaulay was not oblivious of the claims of the vernaculars and looked forward to the formation of a class which should "refine the vernacular dialects of the country, enrich these dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature and render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

From 1835 we pass on chronologically to 1854, when a despatch was written by the Court of Directors of the East India Company to the Governor-General of India in Council on the subject of the education of the people of India, and from this despatch let me quote certain striking passages :—

"It is neither our aim nor our desire," the Directors say, "to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country. We have always been most sensible of the importance of the use of the languages which alone are understood by the great mass of the population.....In any general system of education the English language should be taught when there is a demand for it ; but such instruction should always be combined with a careful attention to the study of the vernacular language of the district and with such general instruction as can be conveyed through that language ; and while the English language continues to be made use of, as by far the most perfect *medium* for the education of those persons who have acquired a sufficient knowledge of it to receive general

instruction *through* it, the vernacular language must be employed to teach the far larger classes who are ignorant of, or are imperfectly acquainted with, English. We look therefore to the English language and to the vernacular languages of India together as the *media* for the diffusion of European knowledge."

The Education Commission of 1882 did not put forward any definite recommendations on the subject, but came to the conclusion that a boy was more intelligent if he had studied through the *medium* of the vernaculars till the highest classes were reached. The Indian Universities Commission of 1902 was strongly in favour of the inclusion of vernaculars as a subject in the higher courses even up to the M. A.

The Government Resolution of 1904 laid down that English should not become the *medium* of instruction earlier than the age of 13, and that no scholar in a secondary school should even then be allowed to abandon the study of the vernacular.

Now these extracts raise some important points.

Macaulay decided in favour of the 'highest education' being in English, but clearly contemplated an improvement of the vernaculars so as to make them the vehicle of Western thought.

The despatch of 1854 went further. It distinctly contemplated the encouragement and enriching of the vernaculars by translations from English, the limitation of English education to very few, and the propagation of Western knowledge through translations.

Sixty-three years have elapsed since the date of Sir Charles Wood's despatch and English education has taken firm hold upon the country. It is surely out of the question now to talk of going back on the established lines of our educational system. The interest of the educated classes is centred in English. English is on the high road to become, if it has not already become, among the educated classes the *lingua franca* all over India. English is required in all the public administration of the country. While I have much sympathy with those who deplore the neglect of the vernaculars, is it not obvious that the substitution at this time of day of the vernaculars for English is beyond the bounds of practical politics, even if the Government were willing to consider such a policy? I would further ask them to remember the great divergence of opinion among the Indian members on this subject which was manifested in the debate in 1915 on the resolution to which I have already alluded. I think that the discussion which then took place affords strong confirmation of what I have just said. Again, the very multitude of the vernaculars presents a practical difficulty for which I have never seen a satisfactory solution propounded. Moreover, with each generation English will come more and more to be learnt not in the schools but in the everyday intercourse of the home. This larger question is not now before you, but in view of what has been urged elsewhere, I have briefly enumerated some of the patent objections to a reversal of the present policy.

Accepting then this position, what is there that we can do? I believe a very real advance can be made in the encouragement of the vernaculars both outside and independently of their place in our educational system and within it.

Again, within our educational system we should carefully consider the present teaching of English. It may be, for instance, that we are concentrating our attention too largely on the teaching of English literature and too little on the acquisition of English as a living language. Whatever the cause, I think it is common ground that the teaching of English in our schools is not as satisfactory as we could wish. It will be for you, gentlemen, to help us with your advice in this matter.

Lastly, I come to the subject of the *media* of instruction.

As you all know, the vernaculars and English are both the *media* of instruction in our schools, and it is sometimes over-looked to what a large extent the vernaculars figure at the present time as a *medium* of instruction. But it is certainly worth our while to examine from the educational standpoint what the

relative position of these *media* should be to each other, having in view the one object, *viz.*, that the pupil should derive the greatest possible advantage from his schooling. This is a matter on which only those who have practical knowledge of work in the schools are competent to advise, and I can only regret that I have not that first-hand knowledge which would entitle me to give an opinion. You, however, have that knowledge and I feel confident that you will be able to give us some sound and practical advice. Do not, I pray you, despise this piece of spadework which we are asking you to do. From my experience of educational work, I would impress on you the importance of these seemingly small points of practical working. The best laid schemes often go astray through the neglect or mishandling of some small detail, of which only those at work in the schools realise the importance. I recognise the value of large and generous ideals in the sphere of education, but we must never forget the need from time to time of examining and making sure our foundations, and what more important, what more practical, task in this connection could be laid upon you than the duty of devising means whereby students may be enabled to obtain a better grasp of the subjects which they are taught and to complete their secondary course with a more competent knowledge of the English language than at present ?

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

scope of the
conference.

Sir Sankaran Nair opened the proceedings by explaining the scope of the conference. There were some, he said, who would wish to see instruction in certain subjects carried out in the vernacular even to a very high standard; and there were others who would introduce the teaching of English freely in the primary schools and at a very early stage. It was recognised that under certain conditions some instruction in the vernacular may be desirable even in university courses, and in English in the elementary classes of primary schools. The object of the conference, however, was to leave such cases out of consideration as far as possible, and to confine attention to the teaching of English in secondary schools and to the medium of instruction in those schools. The intention, therefore, was to see how far modifications in the present system might be effected so that pupils might (a) obtain a better grasp of the subjects which they are taught, and (b) complete their secondary course with a more competent knowledge of English than at present.

systems in
in several
provinces.

2. *Sir Sankaran Nair* then invited the directors of public instruction and such others as were actively engaged in the administration or work of teaching to explain the systems obtaining in the several provinces. *Mr. Natarajan* thought that it would assist the discussion if an understanding were arrived at first of all on the meaning of the term, the medium of instruction. He wished to know whether, in classes where the medium of instruction was English, explanations in the vernacular were permitted. *Mr. Hornell* said that in Bengal this was certainly the case, and that in a large number of schools the teaching was conducted almost invariably in the vernacular throughout the school. The language of the text-books and of the examinations held at the end of the school course were bigger factors in deciding the medium of instruction than the language of the class-room. *Mr. de la Fosse* stated that in the United Provinces there were two classes in the high, four in the middle, and four in the primary stages, in addition to the preparatory classes. The study of English as a foreign language used to be begun in class III and continued up to class VI. A change has recently been made where by English is now taught as a foreign language up to class VIII, the end of the middle stage. In the middle classes the text-books are in the vernacular. English is thus the medium of instruction in the two higher classes only, and even in these the teachers are instructed to make free use of the vernacular in their explanations. The answers in the matriculation and the school-leaving certificate examinations are given in English. *Sir Sundar Lal* added that in the middle classes English technical terms are used, and that this practice is helpful to the pupils later on. *Mr. Richey* said that in the Punjab there were now ten school classes, five primary, three middle and two high. The study of English as a language is begun in the fourth primary class and continued as such until the end of the middle stage. English is the medium of instruction in the high school stage, that is in the two top classes. *Mr. Hornell* pointed out that Eastern and Western Bengal had somewhat different systems. In Eastern Bengal there are four classes in the high stage, two in the middle and four in the primary. English is started as a foreign language in the third primary class and as a medium of instruction at the beginning of the high school stage. In Western Bengal English is started in class VIII B and is the medium of instruction in the high school stage, that is in the four top classes. English as a language is taught as far as possible in English, but this practice does not exclude the use of vernacular words. The direct method has not been very successful and the system of translation is now the ordinary method of instruction. In the high stage English is only nominally the medium of instruction, though the text-books are in English. In the two junior high classes English is not much used and instruction is usually given in the vernacular. As the matriculation draws near, English is used to a greater extent. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* added that even in the primary classes below VIII B, English is often taught surreptitiously as a language. In only a few selected schools on the other hand is a real attempt made to teach English through the medium of that language and the translation method is almost universal. Even in schools where English is used as a medium, the subject-matter is explained in the vernacular. The style of teaching depends largely on the numbers in the classes. As the classes in Bengal are usually very large, there is very

little oral work. The undue influence of the matriculation examination has also led to the neglect of conversational tests. At present there is a tendency to arrange the entire course for the purpose of this examination. Subjects which do not lend themselves to the examination test are greatly neglected. *Mr. Stone* pointed out that in Madras there are eleven school classes. In the three lowest English is not included in the curriculum, but in the next five classes instruction is given in English as a foreign language; and in the top three classes English is the medium of instruction and the text-books are in English. English terms are used as a rule in the middle classes, while in the high classes explanations are often given in the vernacular. The direct method has been introduced from the fourth year class upwards and has been very successful. *Mr. Stone* was of the opinion that more time was spent in Madras than elsewhere in teaching English as a language. About a third of the school time for a period of eight years is devoted to this subject. English can also be taught in the three lowest classes of a school with the permission of the inspector, but this permission is given sparingly. *Mr. Covernton* explained that in Bombay the secondary school consists of seven classes, three in the middle and four in the high standards. In the middle classes English is taught as a second language and very often by the direct method. In the four top classes of a school English may be used as the medium of instruction and text-books are in English. In practice, however, English is not usually the medium of instruction in classes IV and V, but in the two top classes that language is used very generally. In recent years, during the directorship of the late *Mr. W. H. Sharp*, an effort was made to attach a greater importance to the use of the vernaculars as media of instruction and therefore the students were allowed to answer certain papers in the vernacular at the school final examination. *Mr. Covernton* said that he had not been long enough in Bombay to give an opinion on the results of this experiment. Referring to this experiment *Mr. Naik* said that its results must remain indecisive to a large extent, because there were rarely any special classes for students preparing for the school final examination except during the last year at school, and therefore such students as were taught with those preparing for the matriculation examination were naturally unwilling to make use of the permission to write their answers in the vernacular. *Mr. Dwarika Nath* explained that in Bihar the system was similar to that obtaining in Western Bengal. Though the text-books are in English, explanations in classes are given very often in the vernacular. The classes, as a rule, are very large and therefore oral instruction has become a matter of great difficulty. *Mr. Kanhanlal Gura* said that there were twelve classes under the Central Provinces system, five in the primary, four in the middle, and three in the high standards. No English is taught in the primary classes. The methods adopted for teaching English as a foreign language in the middle classes depend very largely on the capacity of the teacher. The English medium is introduced gradually. English figures and technical terms are used in the junior middle classes, and in the third and fourth middle classes English books are used for most of the subjects, though explanations may be given in the vernacular. In the same way, English maps are used in the early middle classes, and the adoption of English in the class-room is only gradually introduced. In the top three classes which belong to the high school stage instruction is given through the medium of English, but it is supplemented by explanations in the vernacular.

The Teaching of English.

3. *The Chairman* then invited opinions on the teaching of English and drew attention to the following questions on the agenda paper :—

- (a) "At what period in a pupil's career should English be taught as a language? Is it better for him, from the point of view of his ultimate mastery over the language, to start its study at an early age or only to receive such instruction after he has been well grounded in a vernacular?"
- (b) "Do the younger pupils gain a satisfactory knowledge of English by their instruction through the medium of that language or do they merely gain a smattering of incorrect and unidiomatic English?"

- (c) "What is the general experience of those boys who have passed through the vernacular middle course and then studied English at a high school? How have such boys distinguished themselves in the matter of English in comparison with those who have studied from an earlier period through the medium of English?"
- (d) "By what methods should the teaching of English be conducted? Does the present system attach too much importance to a knowledge of English literature as against the necessity of learning to speak and write the English language correctly? Should the teaching in the early stages be entirely oral or not?"
- (e) "Do the pupils in a vernacular middle school, as a rule, acquire a better knowledge and grasp of the ordinary school subjects than those of a similar age who have been instructed through the medium of English?"

4. *Mr. de la Fosse* suggested that in discussing the comparative claims of English and vernacular instruction it was necessary first to take into account the fact that English was the medium of instruction at the universities and that this practice should continue. Students in the junior college classes should not only be able to follow the lectures delivered in English without either difficulty or strain, but should also be able to express their thoughts in English and indeed think in English. *Mr. Meston* went even further than *Mr. de la Fosse*. In his opinion, whether a boy went on to a university or discontinued his studies after the completion of the high school course, it was essential that he should possess a really good knowledge of English. This was not merely a question of English *versus* the vernaculars, but one of outlook on life in general. English was the language not merely of the university, but also of the administration and of business. *Mr. Stone* observed that whether this policy was right or not—and he himself thought it right—it was very unlikely that in Madras the university would cease to insist on an adequate knowledge of English from the students. Many other speakers pointed out that students were usually at a great disadvantage on entering college through their inability to follow their lectures or to express themselves with facility in the English language. *Dr. Chatterji* stated that in Bengal the standard of proficiency in English even at the matriculation stage was very unsatisfactory. Provided the teaching was good, he agreed with *Mr. de la Fosse* that an Indian could easily become bi-lingual. *Mr. Hornell* commented on the almost complete inability to speak or write the English language which is displayed by the average pupils of the matriculation classes in the schools of Bengal. *Mr. Dvarika Nath* stated that in Bihar the pupils' knowledge of English was very deficient. Moreover, there had been in recent years an almost continuous deterioration in the standard, and this was particularly the case in the aided schools. *Mr. Natarajan*, speaking from his experience as an examiner in Bombay, agreed on the whole with *Mr. Hornell* and *Mr. Dvarika Nath* that the standard of English was unsatisfactory, but added that in his opinion far too much attention was paid to purity of pronunciation. English people themselves pronounced English in widely different ways. His conviction was that Indian teachers were more likely to understand the difficulties of Indian boys in learning English and therefore should be employed in greater numbers. This suggestion would naturally apply in a much smaller degree to the college classes. Some speakers, however, held views opposite to those expressed by *Mr. de la Fosse*. *Mr. Sivakumara Sastriyar* urged that in Madras boys were able to talk very freely and their English was by no means unidiomatic. They were quite competent to understand the college lectures which were delivered in English. *Mr. Richey* urged that whereas an Indian boy might become bi-lingual, he could scarcely be expected to be bi-mental. *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain* agreed. He also contended that school education should be considered apart from and not only as subsidiary to university education. A comparatively small proportion of school boys—not exceeding 20 per cent. of those in the higher classes—went on to college, and therefore the interests of the school should not be subordinated to those of the university. In India just at present the great problem is that of mass education, and that education must be given in the vernacular. It was not right, therefore, to consider suggestions that would affect

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adversely the interests of primary education. A school boy should not have more than one vehicle of thought, nor need he spend most of his time and energy in learning a foreign language in which to express his thoughts. The mental development of the boy should not be stunted. The school therefore should be regarded as a separate entity, and not merely as a training-ground for the university. *Mr. Natarajan* held similar opinions, and thought that the secondary school course should not be regarded merely as a vocational or a pre-university course. *Mr. Devadhar* spoke in a similar strain. Though he was a lover of English teaching and an advocate of its extension and improvement, yet he held strongly that in schools too much importance could not be attached to the necessity of a sound system of vernacular teaching and practical training. In support of this contention he pointed out that, from a rough analysis of the population, the Indian school system should be so framed as primarily to meet the needs of the agricultural classes who formed, roughly speaking, 70 per cent. of the total school enrolment. In view of the large numbers of pupils who abandon their studies at each stage of the school course *Mr. Devadhar* advocated bifurcation on the lines of the so-called modern side in some English schools in order to prevent wastage and to render education useful in life to a very large majority of the pupils in secondary schools. In reply to *Mr. Devadhar's* remark about the necessity of practical training, *Mr. de la Fosse* stated that in the United Provinces an attempt was being made by means of the school-leaving certificate system to provide a sound training for those pupils who did not intend to continue their education at college.

5. Other arguments beside the requirements of the universities and the necessity for vocational training were brought forward in support of English teaching. *Mr. Natarajan* pointed out that for the last fifty years at least Indian development had been closely connected with the teaching of English and western thought. Any attempt to interfere with this connection would, in his opinion, be fraught with disaster to the country. A boy trained merely through and in the vernacular could not possess that broad outlook on life which should be acquired by a boy who received a good English education. A great defect in any scheme for making the purely vernacular course longer than was necessary would be that boys would not come under the influence of men whose outlook had been broadened by contact with western thought and education. The teaching of the English language and of English literature was a great asset in the general development of Indian boys. *Mr. Naik* pointed out that even the patriotic sentiment demanded English education and hence the teaching of English ought to remain a prominent though not an exclusive feature of any scheme of Indian education. *Mr. Chatterji* spoke of the remarkable growth in recent years of the Bengali language and Bengali literature. Books, of every description were being published every year. Bengal can now boast of eminent scientists, philosophers, poets, historians and novelists. This phenomenon is due to the influence of English education and English culture. English literature has been a source of inspiration in Bengal during the last half century or more. Even English idioms have been introduced into the Bengali language. This being so, it is clear that English education must continue. Moreover, there is a very great demand in Bengal for instruction in English. In face of this demand, any attempt to introduce a vernacular system in secondary schools will meet with complete failure. *Mr. Meston* stated that in Madras also English education was much valued and that the demand for it was extending to all classes and grades of society. *Mr. Stone* protested against the idea that the acquisition of knowledge was the sole or even the primary object of education. The study of English had been proved to be an admirable mental discipline for Indian boys and therefore was of very great importance. *Mr. Meston* agreed and suggested that English took a place in the Indian system of education very similar to that hitherto held by the classics in England.

6. There was a very general feeling against any undue rigidity in the system. *Rigidity in the system should be avoided.* Conditions varied in the several provinces. In alluding to the fact that English instruction was very generally approved in the Madras Presidency, *Mr. Covernton* drew an interesting comparison between his experiences in Burma and in Bombay. In the former province, as in Madras, the provision of English rather than vernacular instruction seemed the correct policy. In Bombay,

on the other hand, there was a very strong desire for vernacular instruction. It might be only a coincidence that in those two provinces whose vernaculars were non-Aryan, there was a keen desire that instruction should be as far as possible in English, whereas, speaking generally, in those provinces whose vernaculars were Aryan the reverse was the case. He gave this merely as a suggestion and could not claim that he had been able as yet to make a detailed analysis of the situation. In any case, he thought there was ample scope for diversity of system. *Mr. Natarajan* pleaded for freedom both for the teacher and the school authorities in regard to the teaching methods that should be adopted, and in the matter of school organisation. *Mr. de la Fosse* agreed that no hard-and-fast rules should be applied. *Mr. Stone* pointed out that in Madras a great deal of latitude was allowed and that, under certain conditions, English could be taught in schools in the elementary stages. *Mr. Hornell* also agreed with *Mr. Natarajan*. For example, he thought that the final decision as to where and when the medium of instruction should be changed, should be left very largely to the teacher who knows the calibre of his pupils. He also showed that in Bengal there was a vast difference between theory and practice. On the one hand, though in theory the medium of instruction is English for four years before the matriculation stage, in the average school the vernacular is never really abolished as a medium of instruction in any class. Indeed, there are very few schools in Bengal, and these are usually the best, where English is actually the medium of instruction in all subjects in the four highest classes. On the other hand, few, if any, pupils pass from the middle to the high schools without having learnt some English. Even in the primary schools, English is often taught. *Mr. Meston* alluded to the considerable success attained by girls in Madras in learning English. This was probably due to the fact that girls usually start English at an earlier stage than boys. Considerable latitude therefore should be given to girls' schools in the matter of English instruction. *Mr. Meston* also thought, and *Mr. Richey* agreed with him, that a difference might be made between rural and urban schools. In the former the study of English might be begun later; in the latter it could reasonably be started earlier.

**Comparative
results of
vernacular and
English
teaching.**

7. The conference then tried to collect evidence as to the relative values of the purely vernacular and the anglo-vernacular courses by examining the records in high schools of boys who have completed these courses. It was a matter of great difficulty to draw any reliable deductions from the evidence provided, as conditions are rarely equal. For example, *Mr. Hornell* tried to institute a comparison between the capacity in English and in other subjects generally possessed by the pupils of the schools in Bengal which are conducted according to the departmental curriculum by which English is not begun until after the fourth school year, with the capacity possessed by those boys who have been educated in schools where English is started at an earlier stage. It was generally found that the latter were very little superior in English and were inferior in other subjects: and what little superiority in English they possessed at first was usually lost during the high school stage. This deduction, however, in *Mr. Hornell's* opinion, was scarcely just in that the unaided private schools which do not follow the departmental curriculum are usually inefficient to a degree. A nearer parallel perhaps would be to compare the ordinary high school boy with the student who had passed, or was passing, through a normal school in Bengal, the curriculum of which is in the vernacular. The inspector of schools, Presidency division, has recently attempted to gauge the merits of boys in the third class of a high school, i.e., the third class before the matriculation stage, with boys of corresponding age who were reading in a vernacular training school and knew no English at all. The subjects selected were history, geography, algebra and arithmetic. In history the results were practically the same, in algebra the vernacular boys were better, and in geography markedly better, than the high school boys. *Dr. Chatterji* laboured under similar difficulties as he was unable to find a fair parallel. He said that in his own student days the boys who passed through the middle vernacular course were distinctly better than those in corresponding classes in high schools. It was necessary, however, to take into account the fact that there was then a higher standard in the middle vernacular schools, and especially in Bengali, mathematics, history and geography. There was also a stiff public examination whose influence on the vernacular schools was very salutary. The boys who

obtained scholarships from these schools and gained admission to the high schools were certainly of a high calibre, but they were always deficient in English. Since that time, however, there has been a marked deterioration in the middle vernacular schools which was due mainly to the abolition of the public examination and to the introduction of a uniform course of studies for middle vernacular, middle English, and high schools under Sir Alexander Pedlar's vernacular scheme. As therefore the middle vernacular schools are both unpopular and inefficient and as English is usually taught in them, it is impossible to draw any satisfactory deductions from the records of boys who pass through them to the high schools. *Sir Sundar Lal* and *Mr. Naik* agreed with *Mr. Horrell* that the vernacular boys, as a rule, were more proficient in the ordinary school subjects than those who started English at an earlier stage, and their deficiency in English was quickly removed. The latter was confident that when the college stage was reached the vernacular boys were in no way inferior in English. He also remarked that in Bombay the vernacular boys were at a disadvantage by there being no special classes in the high schools for those who had prolonged the vernacular course. *Mr. Devadhar* agreed, but added that though the vernacular boys might be somewhat deficient in speaking English they were not inferior in composition. *Mr. Covernton* preferred to give no opinion until he had gained a wider knowledge of the Bombay system, but he said that experienced educationists such as the late Mr. W. H. Sharp and Dr. Mackichan were in favour of vernacular teaching in the middle stage. *Mr. Kanhayalal Gurn* speaking from his experience as a headmaster and then as an inspector in the Central Provinces was of opinion that the vernacular middle school boys acquit themselves better both in English and the general school subjects. This was due to the fact that being of more mature age they are the better able to understand a foreign language, and having acquired a better grasp of their general work they can find more time for the study of English. *Mr. Dube* held similar opinions and maintained that it was a matter of accepted experience that a pupil who is taught through the vernacular is mentally more efficient than one who is taught through English. *Mr. Richey* also thought that in the Punjab the vernacular boys did quite well in the special classes in English, and in the general subjects were better than those who started English earlier. *Mr. de la Fosse* said that in the United Provinces there were institutions where a purely vernacular course was adopted. Boys coming from these schools were then attached to special classes in which particular attention was paid to the teaching of English. These boys ordinarily acquit themselves well in the written tests, but are not so fluent in speaking English as those who have started English earlier. *Mr. Chakravarti* speaking also for the United Provinces held strongly that the vernacular boys never recovered from their deficiency in English. *Bakhshi Ram Rattan* said that in the Punjab the scholarship holders from the vernacular schools were undoubtedly good, but they were exceptional. Speaking generally, he thought that the vernacular boys were distinctly inferior in the matter of English and chiefly so in conversation and pronunciation. Speaking for Madras, *Mr. Sesha Ayyar* and *Mr. Sivakumara Sastriyar* agreed that the vernacular boys were at a great disadvantage in English, but in other subjects they were fairly satisfactory, though not as good as the boys who completed the ordinary course. In mathematics, however, the vernacular boys were reasonably good. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* agreed with the latter remark. This, he contended, was due to the fact that the mathematical course prescribed for the to classes of vernacular schools was much stiffer than that for the corresponding forms of high schools. *Mr. Dvarika Nath* said that in Bihar the pupils from the vernacular schools remained deficient in English, though in some subjects such as mathematics they showed very fair capacity.

8. The following resolutions were then put to the meeting:—

1. "Those pupils who come to the English schools after some years of study in the vernacular ordinarily do better in subjects other than English than those who have begun earlier the study of the English language"

Resolutions, }

Messrs. *Richey*, *Fazl-i-Husain*, *Kanhayalal Gurn*, *Sitacharan Dube*, *Bakhshi Ram Rattan*, *Saiyid Muhammad Abdur Raof*, *Dvarika Nath*, *Devadhar*, *Naik*, *Covernton*, and *Sir Sundar Lal* voted for the proposal.

2. "Those pupils who come to the English schools after some years of study in the vernacular ordinarily are and continue to be generally weaker in English than those who began their English studies at an earlier stage."

Messrs. Sivakumara Sastriyar, Sesha Ayyar, Maulvi Ahsanullah, Chakravarti, Bakhshi Ram Rattan, Saiyid Muhammad Abdur Raoof, Dvarika Nath, Chatterji, Natarajan, and Sir Sundar Lal voted for the proposal.

Messrs. de la Fosse, Richey, Hornell, Fazl-i-Husain, Meston. Stone and Covernton accepted the proposal with the deletion of the words "and continue to be."

9. There was a very marked difference of opinion as to the stage in a pupil's career when the study of English as a language should be introduced. One party urged that the teaching of English should be postponed as late as possible and should not be attempted until the pupil has been thoroughly grounded in the vernacular. Other members of the conference held exactly the opposite view and contended that the study of the two languages should be simultaneous, though through the scarcity of efficient teachers in English and other causes, the introduction of English teaching might have to be delayed as a temporary measure. Others again held a middle view and thought that the study of English should be started fairly soon, but should succeed some study in the vernacular.

10. The former party, who favoured the postponement of English teaching as long as possible, were in the main the members from the Punjab, Bombay and the Central Provinces. *Mr. Richey* thought that a premature introduction of English would tend to make school education one-sided and overshadow the general teaching. The object in view was that by the time a boy reached the matriculation standard he should have acquired a satisfactory working knowledge of the English language. The less time, therefore, that he spent on his English studies the more would he have for the general school work which should be taught mainly through the medium of the vernacular. If an excessive time were spent on English, the general knowledge of the pupils must invariably suffer in proportion. In most countries a boy was expected to begin the study of a foreign language at the age of ten, but under present conditions *Mr. Richey* thought that an Indian boy should begin to learn English at the age of nine. There would then be an English course extending over a period of six years. If English is efficiently taught by trained teachers by the direct method it should be, and is, possible to reach in six years the standard which is reached after nine years teaching by untrained teachers through the translation method. Experience in Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province prove this fact. *Mr. Richey* also thought there were other practical considerations which were of the first importance in coming to a decision on this matter. The earlier English is started the more it becomes a monopoly of the town population. If started early in the primary stage, boys in rural areas will have to migrate at a very early age to town schools for English education, or else anglo-vernacular schools will have to be diffusely scattered over rural areas, for which there are neither teachers nor funds available. He also thought that the question of compulsory education should be taken into account. Under the compulsory system the school course would probably be one of four years in the vernacular and as yet any idea of compulsory education in English was out of the question. *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain* felt strongly that the study of English was useless and even harmful until the pupil had been grounded thoroughly in the vernacular. This early teaching of English tended to deprive the Indian boy even of the one vehicle of expression and thought which he should possess. He therefore thought that the teaching of English should not be attempted until the sixth school year, but he added that in deference to public opinion in the Punjab he would accept the introduction of English after four years' instruction in the vernacular. *Mr. Dube* said that the multiplicity of the vernaculars in the Central Provinces rendered the early introduction of English teaching impossible. Apart from this consideration, he held that the pupil would be better able to learn English after a four years' study of the vernacular. If a boy were taught through the vernacular he would learn the ordinary school subjects more quickly

the stage at which the teaching of English as a language should be introduced.

postponement of English teaching.

and would therefore have more time for the proper study of English as a language. *Mr. Abdur Raouf* agreed. *Mr. Kanhayalal Guru* agreed in thinking that in the primary stage the attention of boys should be confined to the vernacular. He held that a boy, who begins English at a very early stage, loses his interest in the vernacular and consequently remains weak in that subject, a deficiency which he is never able to remove owing to an ever-increasing number of subjects which must be studied from year to year. Further, owing to his poor knowledge of the vernacular he finds it hard to grasp the abstract ideas occurring in his English books which can be understood by others, better acquainted with vernacular, by means of translation. The result therefore is that he is able neither to understand nor express himself in either language. The teaching of English therefore should be begun after the primary stage, when a boy is fairly well grounded in his vernacular. *Mr. Naik* agreed with *Mr. Richey* that the premature introduction of English would tend to make the system of education, one-sided. Even under the present arrangements, two out of six periods a day were spent in the teaching of English for seven years in the Bombay Presidency. If good results have not been attained, this was due to other causes and not to insufficiency of time. Critics of the system were apt to pitch their expectations too high. *Mr. Naik* urged that the state of things was not much better in other countries. The learning of the English language was not by any means the sole object of Indian education and any attempt to devote more time to English would react most unfavourably on other subjects. *Mr. Covertton* agreed to some extent with *Mr. Naik's* opinions, but he observed that there was a very strong feeling in Bombay that the pupils' knowledge of English was very weak. There were many who thought that the best remedy for this defect was the addition of an extra class or classes at the end of the school course, by which means the students in the junior college classes might become reasonably proficient in English. *Mr. Fazl-i Husain* observed that instruction of a university type could not be said to begin under present conditions until after the intermediate stage.

11. *Dr. Chatterji*, on the other hand, saw no reason whatever why a boy should be well grounded in the vernacular before he is taught English. He knew many boys and girls in Bengal who spoke English with great fluency and correctness but had received little or no grounding in the vernacular. *Mr. Sivakumara Sastriyar* urged that boys should have as good a command of English as of their own mother tongue. For this purpose, the study of English should be begun at as early a stage as possible. *Mr. Sessa Ayyar* also approved of the old Madras system under which the study of the two languages was begun simultaneously. The earlier English is started the better. He did not apprehend any difficulty in Madras in finding the requisite number of teachers. No benefit was to be gained by waiting until the pupil had been trained in the vernacular. *Mr. Chakravarti* urged that the collective experience of mankind showed that a language could be learnt more easily in the early stages than afterwards. Until, however, a sufficient supply of good teachers was available, he would favour the postponement of English teaching until after the termination of the third school year. *Mr. Meston* agreed with *Mr. Chakravarti* in thinking that in theory the study of English should be started as early as possible. There could be no question in Madras of postponing yet further the teaching of English. Young pupils pick up a language very largely by imitation and therefore easily. In Madras, girls usually were taught English at a very early stage, and with most satisfactory results. *Mr. Meston* did not think that the vernaculars would suffer in any way through a further expansion of English teaching, as they were almost invariably the medium of conversation in the homes. In practice, however, he thought that the study of English should be begun in the fourth school year, but many factors such as the competency of the teachers and the inspecting staff and the place of residence should be taken into account. *Mr. Stone* agreed with *Mr. Meston* that in theory English could not be started too soon. In that case, there would not be the conflict between English and the vernacular such as exists under the present system. If a pupil is introduced to the study of English at a later stage he is apt to attach an exaggerated importance to that language and neglect the other school subjects. *Mr. Dvarika Nath* also emphasised the necessity of starting English as early as possible and thought that this might be done under present conditions after two years' training

The teaching of English and the vernacular should be simultaneous.

in the vernacular. *Mr. Natarajan* felt that a child should begin to study English as soon as he begins to learn. An Indian boy has no inherent difficulty in learning English, and there is no necessity for him to have received a grounding in the vernacular. The study of the two languages, therefore, should be begun simultaneously. A great defect in any scheme for making the purely-vernacular course longer than was necessary would be that boys would not come under the influence of men whose outlook had been broadened by contact with western education.

Some previous grounding in the vernacular should precede the study of English.

12. Other speakers held a somewhat middle position. Whereas some of the speakers referred to in the previous paragraph thought that English should not be taught until the third or fourth school year owing to the dearth of efficient teachers and other reasons, other members of the conference thought that this stage was the right time for an Indian boy to be introduced to the study of the English language. In *Mr. de la Fosse's* opinion, experience showed that class III, i.e., the fourth school year when a boy was nine or ten years of age, was the time for him to start to learn English. By that time he should be able to read and write the vernacular fairly correctly. Provided there were competent teachers he should be taught English by the direct method. He should then learn from a simple reader until he reached the sixth class. Thereafter, efforts should be made to encourage the boy to use a little English in other subjects such as mathematics. No definite rules should be laid down, but the teacher should try to introduce the use of English words and conversation into the ordinary school lessons as far as possible. In the two higher classes of the school the boy should be well trained in English so that by the time the matriculation stage is reached he should be intimate with the English language. Unless this is done, he will not be sufficiently equipped for a college course. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* agreed with *Mr. de la Fosse* that the correct time for starting English was in the fourth school year and added that a good grounding in the vernacular was a necessary preparation for the study of English. *Mr. Hornell* insisted that the postponement of English until after the fourth school year would be very unwise. On the other hand, he did not think that the argument for starting English earlier had been established. In schools where English is taught earlier, the pupils have a great ignorance of the vernacular. *Bakhshi Ram Rattan* also thought that a preliminary teaching in the vernacular was necessary for a proper study of English. The study of English, therefore, should be begun in the fourth school year. This was the general opinion of the conference held recently in Lahore. He would regret very seriously the adoption of *Mr. Fasl-i-Husain's* suggestion that the teaching of English be postponed until the sixth school year. As a big proportion of the pupils—one out of five—left school at that time, and as the knowledge of English acquired by them was by no means negligible, it would be a great pity to deny them these chances of learning English. *Mr. Abdur Raoof* held similar opinions about the necessity of starting English in the fourth school year by boys between the ages of nine and eleven, and after a preliminary training through the vernacular. The teaching of a foreign language without a sound knowledge of the vernacular is a very difficult task. *Sir Sundar Lal* agreed to both these contentions and thought that the United Provinces system was a good solution of the difficulty.

Resolutions.

13. The following resolutions were then put to the vote :—

3. " From the point of view of proficiency in English, pupils should begin their study of the language as early in the school course as possible."

Messrs. de la Fosse, Sivakumara Sastryar, Sesha Ayyar, Maulvi Ahsanullah, Richey, Hornell, Chakravarti, Bakhshi Ram Rattan, Saiyid Muhammad, Abdur Raoof, Meston, Stone, Dvarika Nath, Chatterji, Natarajan and Sir Sundar Lal voted for the proposal.

4. " In existing conditions pupils should ordinarily begin their studies in English between the ages of 9 and 11, and after three years of study through their own vernacular."

Messrs. de la Fosse, Sivakumara Sastriyar, Sesha Ayyar, Maulvi Ahsanullah, Hornell, Chakravarti, Bakhshi Ram Rattan, Saiyid Muhammad Abdur Raoof, Meston, Stone and Sir Sundar Lal voted for the proposal.

(a) *Messrs. Sesha Ayyar and Dvarika Nath* preferred to substitute 'two' for 'three' years.

(b) *Messrs. Richey, Fazl-i-Husain, Sitacharan Dube, Kunhayalal Guru Devadhar, Naik, and Coverton* accepted the proposal with the substitution of 'four' for 'three' years.

Improvements in the Teaching of English.

14. The conference then proceeded to discuss possible improvements in the teaching of English. There was a consensus of opinion that everything centred round the efficiency of the teacher. *Messrs. Dube and Natarajan* emphasised the importance of obtaining not merely better teachers but also men of such character and influence as would mould the characters of their pupils. *Mr. Naik* thought that the teaching of English was adversely affected at present by the lack of teachers specially trained for the purpose and the constant misuse of the English language during the teaching of other subjects. The position varied in the several provinces. *Mr. Richey* said that the Punjab was fortunate in the excellent arrangements for training which had been instituted by his predecessors. *Mr. de la Fosse* explained that in the United Provinces many improvements had been effected both in increasing the pay of teachers and in providing proper facilities for training. *Mr. Sesha Ayyar* said that in Madras there was no serious dearth of efficient teachers of English, but *Mr. Stone* was inclined to qualify this statement. On the other hand, *Mr. Hornell* and *Mr. Dvarika Nath*, speaking for Bengal and Bihar respectively, felt that little could be done until there were big improvements in the efficiency of teachers. The teachers almost invariably were poorly paid and therefore soon turned to other pursuits. In consequence, there was no permanency or stability in the teaching profession. The schools therefore were in a deplorable condition, and even that condition was tending to deteriorate. *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain* said that it was impossible to expect much from the ordinary primary school whose total income amounted to some 250 rupees a year. *Mr. Dvarika Nath* made an earnest appeal for improved conditions of service for teachers. He hoped that for such a purpose increased Government grants would be forthcoming. *Dr. Chatterji* agreed with *Mr. Dvarika Nath*, but contended that there was another source of income which had not been mentioned. The fee rates in high schools which at present are lamentably low should be increased. In his opinion, a cheap education must lead inevitably to bad results. He was aware that the country was poor, but at the same time in secondary schools very much money was spent on private tutors, whose services should be unnecessary if only the school teaching were efficient. He did not desire any act of legislation but preferred to trust to moral persuasion. He had suggested to the authorities of a certain aided high school that the fee rates might be increased to Rs. 5 per mensem throughout the school. The institution which consists of 500 boys would then have a monthly income of Rs. 2,500. The authorities have provisionally agreed to his proposal. He hoped to introduce a similar scheme in other schools, but he realised that such a rate could not be applied to all schools. *Mr. Dvarika Nath* also thought that for the proper teaching of English a member of the Indian Educational Service should be placed on the staff of every Government high school at the divisional headquarters, and that the aided high schools should be encouraged to engage the best possible teachers. *Dr. Chatterji* wished to go even further in this direction than *Mr. Dvarika Nath*. In each of the Government high schools there should be a European headmaster, and there should also be a European lady teacher for the infant classes. *Mr. Natarajan*, however, doubted the wisdom of relying upon English masters to teach the English language to Indian school boys. In his opinion Indians, provided they were really efficient, were more likely to understand the difficulties of the boys and, given equality in other respects, were therefore the more suitable.

size of classes,
text-books, etc.

15. The conference also considered certain matters in which improvement might be made and which were connected vitally with the interests of the teachers. *Mr. Devadhar* raised the question of the size of classes and was of the opinion that it was beyond the powers of even a competent teacher to deal adequately with a class of some fifty or sixty boys. The conference was in very substantial agreement with *Mr. Devadhar*. *Mr. Dvarika Nath* urged the necessity of revising the curricula and of reducing the number of subjects in the school course. *Mr. Natarajan* deprecated any attempt to impose on students departmental text-books which were the bane of the present system. *Mr. Hornell* pointed out in this connection that the present matriculation syllabus of the Calcutta University compelled a wrong method of instruction which resulted in the memorising of useless texts.

Training of
teachers.

16. *Mr. de la Fosse* accurately expressed the opinion of the conference in saying that an improvement of primary importance was the provision of better facilities for the training of teachers. Any attempt, for example, to teach boys by the direct method through the agency of inefficient and untrained teachers was bound to end in disaster. He explained the system which obtains in the United Provinces. Graduates were being trained at the Training College at Allahabad and on becoming teachers received an initial salary of Rs. 725 Rs. 80 per mensem. In certain aided schools they might receive at once as much as Rs. 100 per mensem. They often took part in the English teaching in the lower classes of high schools. *Mr. de la Fosse* did not think that there was much use in training undergraduates to teach by the direct method, as these were deficient in general knowledge and attainments. *Mr. Richey* agreed with *Mr. de la Fosse* on the importance of training, but thought that it was quite possible to train matriculates to become efficient English teachers. In the Punjab matriculates were trained for two years through the medium of English, and the results were on the whole satisfactory. *Mr. Kanhayalal Guru* said that teaching by the direct method by an untrained master was generally not only a failure but actually harmful. *Mr. Covernton* said that the lack of trained teachers was much felt in Bombay. *Mr. Devadhar*, while admitting the value of a trained teacher, pointed out the financial difficulties which confronted high schools under private management in engaging the services of trained teachers. The proportion of such schools was nearly 78 per cent. *Mr. Stone* also advocated an extension and improvement of training facilities. It was hoped that the recent grants given by the Government of India would be of very material assistance. *Mr. Natarajan* was of the opinion that, while training was useful, too much importance should not be attached to the necessity of training. The character and ideals of the teacher were greater factors in the situation than methods of teaching. He quoted an American authority* who said that graduates fresh from college often did better as teachers in schools, owing to their greater mental proximity to their students, than trained men whom training had deprived of some part of spontaneity so essential in dealing with youths during the period of adolescence. *Mr. Fasl-i-Husain* agreed that the trained teacher was necessary, but thought that the question was very largely one of finance.

Teaching
methods.

17. There was a very general agreement that there was much room for improvement in the methods of teaching English. Teaching in the early stages should be very largely oral, but after a few months a simple reader might be placed in the hands of the pupils. *Mr. Hornell* urged that at first the pupil should be taught to listen to and repeat words. By this means the vocabulary of the pupil would be gradually enlarged. It is also by a constant use of words that the grammatical instinct is developed. Insistence on detailed grammatical rules therefore should be avoided. In regard to the direct method, there was a good deal of confusion of thought during the course of the discussion. This was due to the fact that a variety of interpretations were given to the term in question. *Dr. Chatterji* urged that the direct method should be carefully distinguished from the merely oral method. *Mr. Hornell* thought that the direct method did not necessarily exclude in any way the practice of translation, and that the two methods were not inconsistent with each other. *Sir Sundar Lal* was of the opinion that much more attention should be paid to speaking and

* Principles of Secondary Education, by Dr. Garmon, (Messrs. Macmillan, New York).

writing the language correctly, and urged that for Indian boys the translation method was a good way of learning the English language. It was also agreed that the direct method should not become a fetish; and it should not be attempted unless the teachers are efficient. In this connection, *Mr. Dube* pointed out that although teaching by the direct method in the Central Provinces training school was fairly successful the scope was very limited. *Bakhshi Ram Rattan* thought that teachers should be trained specially for the purpose and urged that there was a great need for trained graduates. *Mr. Chakravarti* agreed with these remarks. *Mr. Devadhar* contended that it would be harmful as yet to insist on the direct method. It would also place the aided schools at a grave disadvantage as they cannot usually engage the services of trained teachers. He also urged that the preliminary teaching of English need not necessarily be dissociated from grammar and translation. *Mr. Richey* supported *Bakhshi Ram Rattan* and pointed out that the Punjab conference had been in favour of introducing teaching by the direct method whenever possible. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* said that teaching merely through translation was useless and that boys should be taught how to speak and write the English language correctly. Greater attention should be given to original composition, oral and written. *Messrs Sessa Ayyar* and *Sivakumara Sastriyar* both testified to the good results achieved by the direct method in Madras and urged that teaching in the earlier stages should be almost entirely oral. *Mr. Raoof* approved the introduction of the direct method, but thought that properly trained teachers were essential for the purpose. *Mr. Natarajan* reiterated his plea for freedom, and urged that the teacher was the only person who could adjust his methods to the immediate requirements of his pupils.

18. There was also a general consensus of opinion that too much attention is paid to the teaching of English literature, at any rate in the junior classes. In consequence, the teaching of accurate English is somewhat neglected. *Mr. Hornell* pointed out that there was a double object in view. In the first place, it was necessary to give all the pupils a real grasp of the English language. In the second place, those pupils who have literary tastes should acquire some knowledge of English literature. In practice, the two objects are independent of each other, and the attempt to teach boys the language through the medium of the literature is bound to fail. The solution of the difficulty was to postpone the reading of the literature until a real intimacy with the language has been acquired. *Mr. Hornell* added that for the purpose of understanding the literature a pupil should read both widely and quickly. *Mr. Stone* explained that in Madras the practice was to prescribe a large number of books for general reading. The subjects for the essays in the examination were drawn from these books. *Mr. Stone* was of the opinion that there was a tendency in Madras to emphasise the literary aspect, though possibly not to such an extent as in other provinces. He also insisted on the necessity of having the text-books properly graduated. *Mr. Chakravarti* also thought that supplementary reading in addition to the prescribed books was essential. *Mr. Covernton* agreed. He thought that archaic literature was not required and that selections should be as far as possible from modern authors. English teaching also should be more practical. In all work there must be some incentive. Both *Mr. Dube* and *Mr. Richey* thought that too much attention was paid in schools to an attempt to understand the literature. *Mr. Kanhayalal Guru* also thought that under the present system an excessive importance was attached to the teaching of English literature at the sacrifice of the English language and suggested that before attempting the former proper attention should be paid to the teaching of English grammar and composition. *Mr. Sivakumara Sastriyar* also suggested that the study of English literature should only be attempted when a solid knowledge of the language had been acquired. *Mr. de la Fosse* pointed out that in the United Provinces text-books are not prescribed for the school-leaving certificate examination and that efforts were being made to improve the pupils' knowledge of the English language. In the matriculation, however, in his opinion, the test was almost entirely literary. In consequence, the teaching of English as a language was at a disadvantage. *Mr. Natarajan*, while agreeing to some extent with previous speakers, pointed out that boys should be taught to love the language, and this could only be done by reading and understanding the literature. *Mr. Naik* and *Mr. Devadhar*, however, thought that insufficient

The claims of English literature.

attention was now being paid to English literature. The former added that an early opportunity should be taken to introduce the pupils to its study. *Dr. Chatterji* feared that the passing of the examination was the chief objective and not the learning either of the English language or of English literature. Boys should be encouraged to read books as extensively as possible. At present, the teachers in Bengal make very little use of books, but prefer to talk and dictate notes which are crammed by the boys. The result is that nothing is learnt at all.

The Medium of Instruction.

19. *The chairman* then referred to another group of questions on the agenda paper which dealt with the medium of instruction in secondary schools. The questions were as follows:—

- (a) "To what extent does instruction through the medium of a foreign language (i) hamper the pupils in the acquisition of knowledge crushing their independence and originality of thought and instilling in them the necessity of cram as the only means of learning, (ii) impose a burden on the teachers, and (iii) tend to the impoverishment of the vernaculars?"
- (b) "Are the comparative paucity of suitable text-books in the vernacular, the deficiency of the vernaculars in technical nomenclature and the multiplicity of the vernaculars insuperable objections to extending the use of the vernaculars as a medium of instruction?"
- (c) "Should English be introduced as a medium of instruction gradually or not? If so, at what period and in what degree should it be introduced?"
- (d) "To what extent is it advisable to examine students in certain subjects at the end of their school career in the vernaculars?"

The members of the conference gave their opinions on each of these questions, but it was clear from the course of the discussion that there were two main points for consideration:—

- (a) What difficulties are encountered by pupils and teachers through English being the medium of instruction?
- (b) Should certain sacrifices be made to remove these difficulties?

All were agreed that difficulties existed and also that if these difficulties were to be removed sacrifices would have to be made. The difference of opinion at the meeting, therefore, was not on the truth of the principles laid down, but rather on the extent of the difficulties and the extent of the sacrifices. One party urged that the difficulties were so great that sacrifices should be made. The other party urged that the difficulties were not big enough to warrant a change of system which entailed so great a sacrifice. Generally speaking, the representatives of Bombay, the Punjab and the Central Provinces voiced the former opinion, while the Bengal, Madras and Bihar representatives held the latter view. The members from the United Provinces, in the main, contended that a gradual change was possible.

the difficulties
of the foreign
medium.

20. *Mr. Richey* was of the opinion that the present system of teaching the ordinary school subjects in the higher classes of secondary schools through the medium of a foreign language undoubtedly led to cramming. The pupils, and specially those in the lower classes, could not understand properly the instruction imparted through the medium of English, and therefore adopted the only solution of the difficulty, the memorising of their text-books. *Mr. Dube*, speaking from his experience in the Central Provinces, agreed emphatically with *Mr. Richey* on this point, and thought that cramming was inevitable under the present system. In this connection, *Mr. Hornell* referred to the system in Ceylon with which he once came into contact. In the secondary schools of that colony boys were taught rigidly and exclusively through the medium of English and were prepared for the Cambridge local examinations. The results of this system, in the opinion of one of His Majesty's inspectors of schools in England,

led to the worst possible forms of cramming, so that boys who had spent some six years in a secondary school were unable to pass the junior examination which was well within the scope of an English boy or girl of the age of fourteen. *Mr. Richey* thought that, as a rule, teachers did not like giving instruction in the vernacular, but this was largely a matter of pride, as under present arrangements they thought that this was an inferior form of teaching. Under a different system, this antipathy would soon die out. *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain* saw no reason why everything should be made subservient to the study of English. The pupils suffered very considerably from a confusion of ideas and an incapacity for clear thinking; and these defects were due primarily to instruction being given in a foreign language. *Mr. Hornell* pointed out that the capacity of a pupil to grasp the subjects he is being taught cannot outstrip the knowledge of the medium through which these subjects are presented to him. In Bengal both the teacher and the pupil should be taken into consideration. The teacher, on the one hand, through his unfamiliarity with the medium of instruction could only say in class half of what he wanted to say; the pupil, on the other hand, for the same reason, could only understand half of what his teacher told him. It was clear, therefore, that there must be both waste of energy and confusion of thought. In cases where the difficulty of the language is added to the difficulty of the subject, it is clear that the subject cannot be well taught. *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain* also urged, and *Mr. Raoof* agreed, that the use of English as a medium of instruction was very harmful to the pupils' knowledge of the English language. The boys were encouraged in bad habits and tended to use and to listen to indifferent and ungrammatical English. These defects, once acquired, could only be removed with the greatest difficulty in subsequent years. English as a language should be taught scientifically and at the proper time and place, and no attempt should be made to teach it by making it a medium of instruction in other school subjects. *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain* urged that these views were shared by the majority of educational authorities in the Punjab whose opinions had been voiced at the recent conference in Lahore. *Bakhshi Ram Rattan*, though he could not go quite so far as *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain*, thought that the foreign medium was a big handicap to Indian pupils. His experience as an examiner in Lahore showed clearly that the boys in many cases had no alternative but to cram up their work. He also alluded to the waste of time involved under the present system. The pupils had to learn such subjects as history and geography in the vernacular and then relearn them in English. Under present arrangements boys in the Punjab found time only to learn Indian history and it was a matter for keen regret that they learnt no English history at school. If only the medium of instruction in history were the vernacular, *Bakhshi Ram Rattan* hoped that ample time could be found for the study of English history. *Mr. Raoof* agreed and thought that the time saved by teaching through the vernacular could then be spent in giving a more methodical training in the English language. *Bakhshi Ram Rattan* also stated that in the Punjab in recent years an extension of the use of the vernaculars as media of instruction had been made, and that, in the opinion of the large majority of educationists in that province, the experiment had been a success. He thought that the study of English would not suffer by the vernacular being the medium of instruction, and that the present system entailed a great and unnecessary burden on the boys. *Mr. Sesha Ayyar*, though coming from Madras, said that his experience had converted him to the vernacularist point of view. He commented on the frequent revision of work, first in one language and then in another, necessitated by the change in the medium of instruction at some stage in the school course. Boys were therefore expected to crowd too much into the school course and tended to acquire the deplorable habit of learning by heart dictated notes. In consequence, they never gained a real grasp of the subjects, and therefore the universities were forced to do what should be the work of schools, and much to the detriment of sound learning and national development. Through their instruction in a foreign language the pupils were apt to look upon the simplest lessons as something mysterious and difficult. They therefore lost heart and relied on the memory instead of the understanding. *Mr. Sesha Ayyar* claimed that every boy had some individuality of his own which should be fostered by teaching in that language with which he was familiar. The aim of the school should be to provide not so much for the genius as for the boy of average capacity. As

the results of the present system had been most disappointing, he advocated a change. *Mr. Kanhayalal Guru* also thought that the foreign medium was attended by evil results and that the pupils rarely understood properly the lessons given in English. He further added that there were two difficulties under the present system, *viz.*, the subject matter and the English medium, which might be reduced to one by the introduction of the vernacular medium as far as possible for all subjects other than English. *Mr. Naik* did not think that the study of English was in any way improved by English being the medium of instruction. Indeed, the foreign medium of instruction was the bane of the present educational system. Not only should explanations be given in the vernacular, but English text-books should not be used in schools. *Mr. Devadhar* held somewhat similar views though he admitted that opinions in Bombay were much divided on the subject. He urged that the time had come to emphasise the use of the vernaculars as media of instruction in teaching non-language subjects up to standard V of the high school. The foreign medium led to much waste of time and the habit of cramming on the part of the pupils.

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exaggerated.

21. Other members of the conference contended that the difficulties of the foreign medium could easily be exaggerated. *Mr. de la Fosse* and *Mr. Covernton* while admitting that some burden was imposed on the pupils, thought that improvements in the efficiency of the teaching would tend to remove the defects. *Sir Sundar Lal* was also of the opinion that by the time they reach the senior classes in the school the pupils have overcome the difficulties to a large extent. *Mr. Sivakumara Sastriyar* thought that many of the difficulties referred to by previous speakers could not fairly be attributed to the foreign medium but were due to other causes and primarily to indifferent teaching. The originality of the pupil was not crushed by his learning through a foreign language. A good deal depended on the mental background of the pupil which the teachers should try to secure. The inward light could easily break through the foreign medium. *Mr. Meston* and *Mr. Stone* urged that the difficulties were in themselves a valuable part of education and provided an excellent mental and moral discipline. The former also held that such difficulties as existed were due primarily to the indifferent and lifeless way in which English was taught, a legacy inherited from the methods of the pandits. In schools where the teaching was good and where English was properly correlated with other subjects, there was little fear of serious dislocation. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* and *Dr. Chatterji* both combated the idea that English should be regarded as a foreign language. The former contended that, far from crushing originality, the English language had developed a spirit of independence and original thought in the Indian. It had instilled energy and zeal into his mind and widened his outlook. He also claimed that the ordinary teacher did not consider it a hardship to give his instruction in English. In Bengal there was no dearth of English-speaking teachers, but on the other hand the number of those who could give instruction in the vernacular was limited. *Mr. Chakravarti* admitted that there were difficulties in the present system, but urged that the learning of English was one of the objects of school education in this country. It was not possible to force education from life, and therefore any hardship that might arise should readily be accepted. *Mr. Natarajan* quoted a letter written some ninety years ago and eleven years before Macaulay's minute by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Lord Amherst, in which he pleaded for English as against Arabic and Sanskrit and considered the idea of using the vernaculars as media of instruction in those days unthinkable. The arguments brought forward in that letter still obtain today, but the obstacles in the way of English education are now so great. The necessity of English education, moreover, is still more obvious than it was in those days. There was no reason whatever, therefore, in *Mr. Natarajan's* opinion why there should be any reversal of policy such as had been suggested. If instruction were given through the medium of the vernacular there was no reason to anticipate that the practice of cramming would be reduced. This point was in no way a monopoly of India. *Mr. Covernton* thought that cramming in this country was largely traditional and that it was not altogether an evil. *Mr. Natarajan* was also of the opinion that a knowledge of the English language was fostered by making it the medium of instruction. *Mr. Dvarika Nath* said that in Bihar there was also a great demand for English education and that the vast majority of people realised the

importance of English teaching. The present defects were due to the weakness of the teaching rather than to the use of the foreign medium of instruction. *Mr. Hornell* again pointed out that the indifferent state of secondary education in Bengal could not be attributed primarily to the foreign medium, for in practice in the majority of schools the teaching was conducted almost entirely in the vernacular.

22. There was a greater unanimity among the members of the conference in discussing whether or not the vernaculars had been impoverished by the use of English to a large extent as the medium of instruction in schools. *Mr. Sivakumara Sastriyar* referred to the vernacular associations in Madras which were doing excellent work in encouraging the vernaculars. In reply, *Mr. Sesha Ayyar* contended that the primary object of these associations was to fight for the vernaculars as media of instruction and that, if that incentive were removed, their work would be of little value. *Mr. Meston* said that there was no danger of the vernaculars being neglected so long as they were the media of conversation in the homes. Besides, he referred to the remarkable development of vernacular literature in Madras which indicated clearly that there was no danger of impoverishment. *Dr. Chatterji*, as shown above, thought that the recent development of Bengali literature was due primarily to English instruction. Indeed, such improvements as had been made in recent years, and they have been considerable, were due almost entirely to the influence of English education. If the past is any guide to the future, the enrichment of the vernaculars must be largely helped by the influence of English education. *Mr. Devadhar* believed that the enrichment of the vernaculars depended very largely upon the propelling force of the message which those who received an English education felt bound to deliver to the masses who could never read English books.

23. The conference then considered whether, admitting that the foreign medium was a heavy burden on pupils and teachers alike, a drastic change would be justified. Some thought that the change could be effected with comparatively little difficulty; others that the sacrifice would be very great. The Madras representatives, except *Mr. Sesha Ayyar*, felt that the difficulties arising from the multiplicity of the vernaculars would be almost insuperable. It was pointed out that in some places it was almost impossible to state what was the vernacular. It would also be difficult in some schools to make adequate provision for the Muhammadan pupils. *Mr. Sesha Ayyar*, however, thought that this difficulty would be confined in the main to the city of Madras, as each locality fell under a distinct language area. *Mr. Devadhar* did not consider these difficulties in any way insuperable. He suggested that a school might have two sides, a practice which was already in force in the Bombay Presidency, where there might be the Gujarati and Marathi sides of a school. The deficiency of the vernaculars in technical nomenclature did not present any serious obstacles, as even the most ardent vernacularist did not object to the use of English technical terms. There was a general agreement with *Mr. Chakravarti* that duplication in nomenclature was confusing and should therefore be avoided. *Mr. Kanhayalal Gurni* thought that the vernacular technical terms being generally much harder to learn than those in English, the use of the former in the class-room would be a source of trouble to the boys. Another difficulty was offered by the diversity of the vernaculars. Both these difficulties, however, could be removed by the use of English technical terms. The language used by the teacher for his explanations in vernacular might be of the type ordinarily spoken in that particular locality so as to be easily intelligible to all the pupils in a class. *Mr. Gurni* did not desire the boys to be unacquainted with the vernacular technicalities. With a view to this end he suggested the supply to the boys of printed bi-lingual glossaries of each subject for their frequent reference.

Over the question of the text-books, however, there was a very wide difference of opinion. *Mr. de la Fosse* thought that there was no serious paucity of vernacular text-books for the junior classes. In the senior classes, however, there was a serious dearth of good books, and especially in mathematics and history. If any change were to be made, it would be necessary to translate English text-books or write new ones. *Mr. Sesha Ayyar* said that text-books were being published in the vernacular. *Mr.*

Richey admitted that as yet there was a dearth of good vernacular text-books and that even offers of rewards by Government had not induced men to write in the vernacular, but he thought that this reluctance could easily be overcome were the system of education different. *Sir Sundar Lal* said that as there were only two versions of the vernacular in the United Provinces, the system of using English technical terms would obviate any difficulties that might arise in that respect. Suitable text-books could easily be prepared. *Mr. Covernton* thought that the demand would create the supply. *Messrs. Naik, Kanhayalal Guru and Fazl-i-Husain* did not anticipate any serious difficulty in the provision of suitable vernacular text-books. *Mr. Devadhar* thought that the vernacular associations would render valuable assistance in the publication of vernacular text-books. *Mr. Hornell*, however, held very different views. He pointed out that there were few things in education that required more skill and care than the writing of text-books. The text-books now in general use in schools in England represented the experience of a large number of years. *Mr. Hornell* could not think it a wise policy to throw over that experience, especially when there was considerable uncertainty as to what would take its place. Text-books, however well translated from the English, could never be as good as the original. *Mr. Natarajan* agreed emphatically with *Mr. Hornell*. The substitution of vernacular for English teaching and of vernacular for English text-books would check progress in India for perhaps thirty or forty years and be disastrous to the interests of the country. He repeated that whatever might be the merits of a vernacular course, the boys would be largely failures so far as decision of character and resourcefulness were concerned. He was also doubtful whether the vernacular books would be forthcoming. The vernacular training colleges in the Bombay Presidency had been in existence for a number of years, but the teachers trained there had not shown any desire to write vernacular text-books. *Mr. Natarajan* also referred to recent experience in Japan and quoted from the report of the late Mr. W. H. Sharp. Under the old system the teaching was in Japanese, but the text-books were in English. The recent substitution of vernacular for foreign text-books had resulted in a considerable falling off in the pupils' knowledge of the foreign language. *Dr. Chatterji* said there were many Bengali text-books, but would still insist on the use of English text-books as early in the school as possible. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* pointed out that English was the *lingua franca* of educated Indians throughout India, and therefore no changes should be made which would relegate it to the position of a foreign language like Latin or Greek. Any attempt to do so would have a disastrous consequence.

The stage at which the foreign medium should be introduced.

24. In consequence of these differences of opinion, there was not much unanimity in the conference as to the stage when English should be introduced as the medium of instruction. *Mr. Richey* thought that the use of English as the medium should be postponed as long as possible. While the teaching was in the vernacular, there was no reason whatever why the pupils should not be trained to write their answers in English. Such a practice would tend to improve not only the knowledge of the ordinary school subjects, but also the capacity of the pupils to write grammatical and orderly English. *Mr. Fazl-i-Husain* went further in claiming that even English might be taught partly through the vernacular. *Mr. Dwarika Nath*, on the other hand, urged that English should be the medium in the four higher classes of the secondary school. *Mr. de la Fosse* thought that the total exclusion of English as the medium in the middle stages would result in an indifferent knowledge of English by the pupils in the higher stages. This deficiency would therefore react most unfavourably on the college instruction and render the college teaching to a large extent ineffective. In the teaching of English, *Mr. Hornell* suggested that English should be used as much as possible, but not exclusively. This was the general opinion of the conference. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* also referred to the teaching of Sanskrit and Arabic in Bengal. The results of that teaching which was ordinarily conducted in English were deplorable. *Mr. Hornell* agreed emphatically with *Maulvi Ahsanullah*. He pointed out that the matter was one of very considerable importance as a classical language is taken by every boy who appears for the matriculation of the Calcutta University. The results of the present system were very poor indeed. The pandit and the maulvi are usually incapable of translating into English, and therefore the boys are compelled to learn by heart a key written, as a rule, in

execrable language. The mental gymnastic demanded by the pupil under the present system is intolerable. He tries first to translate the classical text into his "thinking language" which is Bengali, and then tries to translate his Bengali thoughts into English, of which language he has a very imperfect knowledge. Until radical improvements can be made in the teaching *Mr. Hornell* was of the opinion that Sanskrit should be taught through the medium of Bengali and made part of a serious study of the vernacular.

25 The following resolutions were then put to the meeting :—

Resolutions:

5. "The vernacular should be the medium of instruction in all the classes of a high school."

Messrs. Fazl-i-Husain, Sitacharan Dube and Naik voted for the proposal.

Messrs. Sesha Ayyar, Richey, Kanhayalal Guru and Devadhar accepted the proposal with the addition of the words 'as far as possible in subjects other than English.'

6. "English should be the principal medium of instruction in the two higher classes of a high school."

Messrs. de la Fosse, Sivakumara Sastriyar, Maulvi Ahsanullah, Hornell, Chakravarti, Saiyid Muhammad Abdur Raof, Meston, Stone, Dvarika Nath, Chatterji, Natarajan, Devadhar, Covernton and Sir Sundar Lal voted for the proposal.

- (a) *Mr. Sesha Ayyar* accepted the proposal with the substitution of 'the highest class' for 'two higher classes.'

- (b) *Messrs. Sivakumara Sastriyar, Maulvi Ahsanullah, Hornell, Chakravarti, Meston, Stone, Dvarika Nath, Chatterji, Natarajan, Covernton and Sir Sundar Lal* would accept the substitution of 'three' for 'two' classes.

- (c) *Maulvi Ahsanullah, Messrs. Hornell, Chakravarti, Dvarika Nath, Chatterji, Natarajan and Covernton* would accept the substitution of 'four' for 'two' classes.

26. The conference was generally agreed that the introduction of English as the medium of instruction should be effected gradually. *Mr. Hornell* suggested that in subjects demanding a knowledge of technical terms, such as mathematics and geography, the medium of English should be utilised at an early stage. History should be taught in English where the text is sufficiently simple and where easy questions and answers are involved. *Mr. de la Fosse* said that it was the practice in the United Provinces to introduce gradually the foreign medium, but he thought that the teachers should be encouraged to use English terms more extensively than they did. *Mr. Sivakumara Sastriyar* agreed with the latter suggestion. *Maulvi Ahsanullah* was much in favour of the gradual introduction of the foreign medium. He suggested that in the fifth year English figures might be used in arithmetic lessons and in the following year English names in the geography teaching. After that, history and geography could be taught in English, and in the four top classes of a school all instruction could be given through the medium of English. *Bakhshi Ram Kattan* thought that all subjects in which expression plays an important part should be taught, as far as possible, in the vernacular. Other subjects, such as science and mathematics, could be taught in English in the top two classes. *Mr. Covernton* held somewhat similar opinions. *Mr. Hornell*, however, protested against any hard-and-fast rules. In his opinion, the efficient teacher was best capable of judging where and when the medium of instruction should be changed. *Sir Sundar Lal* thought that if it was decided to emphasise still more the use of the English medium in the schools, the change should be carried out gradually, subject by subject, and should descend downwards from the higher classes. *Mr. Kanhayalal Guru* said that the English medium should be introduced gradually as was the custom in the system obtaining in the Central Provinces.

The gradual introduction of English as a medium of instruction.

27. Unfortunately, there was little time for the discussion whether or not student might be examined in the vernacular at the end of their school course. *Mr. Hornell* explained that under the restrictions of the Calcutta University history was not a compulsory subject in the matriculation examination, and that the answers might be written in English or in the vernacular. He did not think that this concession was used to any great extent, nor did he believe that

Medium of examination at the end of School course.

such answers as were in the vernacular were in any way superior to those in English. He added that the question papers were in English. *Mr. Covernton* explained that in Bombay certain of the papers in the school final examination could be answered in the vernacular if the candidates so wished. He said that he had not yet had time to compare the records of those who answered in English with those who answered in the vernacular, but it was doubtful whether the latter showed any marked superiority. *Mr. Devadhar* disputed this expression of opinion on the strength of the remarks made by the examiners appointed by the Department and thought that the experiment had already proved successful to some extent. It was also urged that as the text-books were in English and as the medium of instruction in the classes preparing for this examination was English the concession of answering questions in the vernacular could not be of any great value to the pupils. *Mr. Devadhar*, therefore, advocated that an option of answering questions in non-language papers in English or vernacular be given to those candidates who did not intend to proceed to the university. *Mr. Natarajan* said that in the Bombay matriculation examination candidates were not examined in certain subjects, such as science and geography. The headmasters of schools were expected to certify that their students had completed satisfactorily the prescribed courses in these subjects. The mere fact that there was a strong feeling in Bombay that this concession should be withdrawn and that candidates for matriculation should be examined publicly in all subjects, showed that the concession was not much valued. *Bakhshi Ram Rattan* said that at the recent conference in Lahore a resolution had been passed by a small majority that candidates should be given the option of answering their examination questions in the vernacular. The experiment of examining students in the vernacular had been tried in the Gurukula and was reported to be successful. *Sir Sundar Lal* thought that pupils preparing for university courses or the learned professions should be examined, as at present, in English. Those, however, who were not intending to continue their education beyond the high school stage, should be allowed to answer their papers in the vernacular. In the United Provinces such a course would be practicable only in the school-leaving certificate examination. The matriculation system of the Allahabad University extends over an area larger than that of the province and includes provinces where other vernaculars are current. No change in the matriculation therefore was possible at present. *Mr. de la Fosse* agreed. *Mr. Sesha Ayyar* thought that there was room for experiment and that candidates should have the option of answering in English or in the vernacular. *Mr. Richey* thought that the candidates who intended to go to the university should be required to answer in English the papers on those subjects which they intended to study at college. *Mr. Meston* could see no advantage in giving such concessions. *Mr. Stone* said there was a very little demand for any change and that candidates wished to make as good a show as possible in the examinations. For example, those who answered their papers in the vernacular might easily be penalised in their efforts to obtain employment. *Dr. Chatterji* saw no harm in making the experiment. *Mr. Dube*, on the other hand, thought that so long as examinations continued to be held in English, all teaching will be subordinated to that end. *Mr. Kanhayalal Guru* thought that students could well be examined in the vernacular during and at the end of their school career in all the subjects except English provided that English technical terms were allowed to be used in answering papers in mathematics and certain other subjects.

28. The following resolutions were then put before the conference :—

7. " Examinations at the end of the high school course should be in the vernacular in all subjects except English. "

Messrs. Fazl-i-Husain and Sitacharan Dube voted for the proposal.

8. " Candidates should have the option of answering the examinations at the end of the high school course in English or the vernacular in all subjects except English. "

Messrs. de la Fosse, Sesha Ayyar, Richey, Fazl-i-Husain, Sitacharan Dube, Kanhayalal Guru, Chakravarti, Bakhshi Ram Rattan, Saiyid Muhammad Abdur Raof, Chatterji, Devadhar, Naik and Covernton voted for the proposal.

29. There were 21 members at the conference, excluding the Government of India officials who did not vote.

